

Coop Living is Hard.COM

Insights for Living with Others More Skillfully

Finding New Members

- Do you like the person?
- Do you trust that they...
 - Understand the household agreements?
 - Are excited to follow through with the household agreements?
 - Are emotionally and physically capable of fulfilling the household agreements?

To Do

- Decide on a process for how a new member will be found, interviewed, and selected.
- Generate a document listing all of the household agreements. E.g. a house manual.

Things to Keep in Mind While Searching for a New Housemate:

- Get to know people as much as reasonably possible before accepting them.
- How will the prospective member integrate with the existing group?
- How will the house accept their individual diversity?
- Invite people to live in your house that you are confident that you will want to spend time with!

What Questions To Ask Prospective Members? (Choose questions that work for your house)

"Do you understand the household agreements?"

"What are your thoughts about the household agreements?"

"Are you excited to follow through with the household agreements?"

"Are you concerned about your ability to follow through with those household agreements?"

"What priority will you place on attending house meetings?"

"Could you describe an experience or two where you have had a conflict with someone you lived with? How did you deal with it? What went well? What might you have done differently?"

"How comfortable are you with addressing conflict directly?"

"What is something that you expect to have or be able to do in your house?"

"Living with a group of humans in close proximity can bring up uncomfortable topics. For example "What would you do if...you heard sexual noises coming from another housemate's room at night?" <or insert relevant example>

"How do you support yourself financially?"

"Have you had trouble paying your rent on time in the past?"

"What is your motivation for living in a coop?"

"How familiar are you with the practice of being in the present moment regardless of what is happening?"

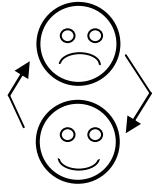
"Are you familiar with the phrase: 'Putting yourself in their shoes?' Can you give an example how you have done this?"

"How often do you typically invite friends and family to visit your home?"

"How close do you like to be with the people you live with?"

"What is your typical day-to-day schedule like? Would it accommodate our meetings, dinners, etc?"

"Do you have a partner or significant other that lives outside of the house? If so, how often are you visiting them and vice versa?"



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SUPPORT...

High involvement
Financial solvency
Shared values that housemates agree to
Clear expectations of household members
Easily communicated individual needs
Equal rights for all members
Confrontation of problems
Verbalizing issues as they arise
Members speaking up when uneasy
Maintaining mutual positive attitudes towards each other
Maintaining positive member attitudes towards the coop
Group trips outside of the house
Re-committing to make the household agreements work
Members committing to have it be a coop house
Creating reasonable & acceptable household agreements
Members committing to be flexible and make compromises
A sense of belonging and responsibility to others
Acknowledgment that conflicts will emerge
Acceptability of diverse opinions
Physical touch (hugs, high fives, etc.)
Appreciating each other

Conflict happens, deal with it!

- Talk early and often, before conflict gets out of hand.
- Deal with conflicts early.
- Encourage confrontation of problems.
- If two people aren't talking: they either need to start talking or one or both need to leave the coop.

RESTRICT...

Unwillingness to deal with conflicts
Unwillingness to make decisions or create order
Too much individualism over being part of the group
Housekeeping conflicts
Jealousy
Sex scandals
Low communication
Lack of care expressed towards others' needs
Unfulfilled expectations
"Power plays" e.g. No manipulation
"Rescues" – don't act on others' needs
Someone taking on more responsibility than others
Secrets
Lying
One housemate dominating by inviting many guests
Devaluing or putdowns towards the coop

Decisions must be made and how they are made matters!

- For new coops deciding how decisions are made is the first thing that should be decided!
- Consensus-based decision making is the most common household agreement for making most coop decisions while many also have a backup voting system in place if unable to move forward. Consensus narrowly defined means everyone must unanimously agree to make a decision.
- Once there is a decision process it is important to follow it to avoid feelings of confusion, manipulation, etc.